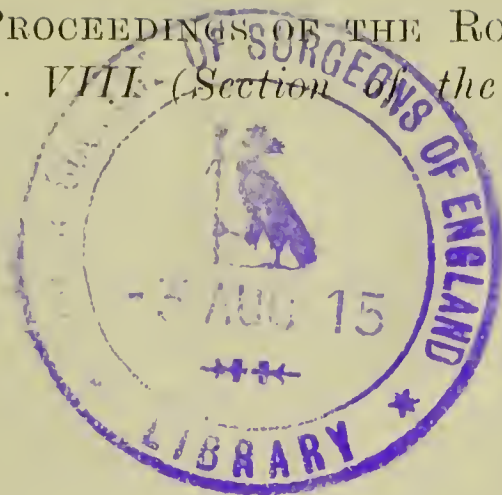


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## OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND MEDICINE.

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THE relations of Oliver Goldsmith with the profession of medicine, and the vexed question of his medical graduation, have recently been the subject of two illuminating papers<sup>1</sup> by Sir Ernest Clarke. On the strength of these he asks us to accept it, as established beyond reasonable doubt, that Goldsmith obtained the degree of Bachelor of Physic (M.B.) from Dublin at some date prior to 1763. Believing, as we do, that the evidence is compatible only with the presumption that Goldsmith had no degree in medicine at all, other than that conferred by Oxford University in 1769, probably under a misapprehension, we venture to indicate some of the difficulties that seem to need explanation before acceptance of his conclusion. Perhaps from the autograph letters and intimate memoranda, with mention of which he has tantalised but not gratified us, he may produce other information to substantiate his claim. Dates are of such material importance to the inquiry that it is necessary at the outset to determine a few prominent landmarks in Goldsmith's career.

Born on November 10, 1728, he was admitted a sizar at Dublin on June 11, 1745, and took a belated degree of Bachelor of Arts, also at Dublin, on February 27, 1749, at the age of 20. After this, still resident all the time in Ireland, he successively read for holy orders, held a private tutorship for a year, coquetted with the profession of law, and wasted much time and money in indolence and adventure, till some date in 1752, when the family oracle, Dean Goldsmith, of Cork,

<sup>1</sup> "Oliver Goldsmith as a Medical Man," *Nineteenth Century and After*, April, 1914; "The Medical Education and Qualifications of Oliver Goldsmith," *Proc. R. Soc. Med.*, 1914, vii (Hist. Sect.), pp. 88-98.

propounded the opinion that Providence had fashioned him for nothing else than a doctor. The first-fruits of this advice seem to have been the attendance of Oliver at some courses of anatomy in Dublin. This is affirmed by Glover, who himself commenced the study of medicine in Dublin, and had therefore every opportunity of knowing. Be it noted also, in passing, that this same Glover states that it was at Louvain that Goldsmith obtained his medical degree. For some reason which we do not know, but which in view of the record of his previous turbulent residence in Dublin we may guess, it was decided that the heavier soil of Edinburgh would be more favourable to the growth of this very capricious sapling. So to Edinburgh he went in the autumn of 1752. Of his presence in this medical school, at the end of October, 1752, there is documentary evidence in the extant class-rolls of the professor of anatomy. At this point the known facts seem to conflict with the conclusions of Sir Ernest Clarke's papers. Among the memoranda of Bishop Percy, made from Goldsmith's own dictation on April 28, 1773, and recently in Sir Ernest's temporary possession, is the following:—

“After taking the degree of A.B. he proceeded upon the line of Physic, and took the degree of M.B. when he was about 20, he however ceased to reside after his degree of A.B.”

Now we have seen that Goldsmith did not commence the study of medicine till between 23 and 24 years of age; therefore, if we are to accept his statement as true, we must assume that Dublin conferred its medical baccalaureate upon him before he had commenced the study of medicine, after a career which had given a good deal of incidental dissatisfaction to the University authorities, without further residence, and without lapse of the prescribed interval between the Arts and the medical degrees. Now when Goldsmith made this statement to Percy in 1773, he had no option but to specify Dublin as the source of his original medical degree, for he had formally notified the same to Oxford University in 1769, when Johnson and Percy accompanied him thither for the conferment of the *ad eundem* degree of that University. No one reading fairly Goldsmith's statement as given by Percy can contend that Dublin is not indicated, seeing that, until he was close upon the age of 24, Goldsmith had never left Ireland, and had had no relations whatever with any university but that of Dublin, where also he had graduated B.A. We know, however, under Goldsmith's own hand, from an undated letter to his uncle Contarine,



written from Leyden early in 1754, that he was without a degree at the age of 25. We need not press this point further at this stage beyond insisting that either Goldsmith's statement or Percy's record of it is wrong, and, not unmindful of Johnson's testimony to Percy's meticulous accuracy, we shall hope to show that the former alternative accords best with the other evidence. Loyalty to his friend, whose frailties were only too familiar to him, appears more than once to move Percy to an economy of information.

Of Goldsmith's life in Edinburgh his own surviving letters tell us enough to justify the belief that, at that period of his career, he did seriously intend to prepare himself for the practice of medicine. On May 8, 1753, he wrote to his uncle Contarine, as follows:—

“Apropos, I shall give you the professors' names, and as far as occurs to me, their characters: and first, as most deserving, Mr. Munro, professor of Anatomy. This man has brought the science he teaches us to as much perfection as it is capable of; and not content with barely teaching anatomy, he launches out into all the branches of physic, when all his remarks are new and useful. 'Tis he, I may venture to say, that draws hither such a number of students from most parts of the world, even from Russia. He is not only a skilful physician, but an able orator, and delivers things in their nature obscure in so easy a manner, that the most unlearned may understand him. Plume, professor of Chemistry, understands his business well, but delivers himself so ill, that he is but little regarded. Alston, professor of *Materia Medica*, speaks much, but little to the purpose. The professors of Theory and Practice (of physic) say nothing but what may be found in books laid before us; and speak that in so drowsy and heavy a manner, that their hearers are not many degrees in a better state than their patients. You see then, dear sir, that Munro is the only great man among them, so that I intend to hear him another winter, and go then to hear Albinus, the great professor at Leyden. I read (with satisfaction) a science the most pleasing in nature, so that my labours are but a relaxation, and, I may truly say, the only thing here that gives me pleasure. How I enjoy the pleasing hope of returning, with skill, and to find my friends stand in no need of my assistance,” &c.

That Goldsmith did actually carry out his intention of sitting at the feet of Munro for another winter session we learn from the extant class-rolls of that professor.

An entry in the books of the Medical Society of Edinburgh, a voluntary association of students, shows that Goldsmith was admitted a member on January 13, 1753, but was exempted from the usual obligation of reading a paper on a medical subject; perhaps his social rather than his professional recommendations had secured him the



entrée of the society. We may assume that the child was father of the man, for Percy speaks of his inordinate desire throughout life to gain applause by buffoonery. Goldsmith did not find to his liking the motherly frugality of his Edinburgh landlady, who made a leg of mutton, variously garnished, do duty for a week, the residual bone functioning as the chief ingredient of a broth on the seventh day, and took himself off to a lodging frequented by other students, whom he entertained with songs and stories. Percy says that his attention to his studies at Edinburgh was by no means regular, and that his health was injured and his pocket drained by his mixing in orgies of dissipation. An extant leaf of his Edinburgh tailor's ledger testifies to his weakness for gaudy clothing, but at the same time exonerates him, at this period of his life, from the charge of extravagant expenditure on dress. Such other knowledge as we possess of his doings at Edinburgh is not essential to our subject, but it will be well to note that he was habitually short of money, and that supplies, necessarily small, were forwarded to him periodically by his uncle Contarine.

From Edinburgh, after sixteen months' residence, Goldsmith transferred himself, in February, 1754, to Leyden, and it will be necessary to investigate the circumstances of this transference. The first material document is a letter to his uncle, the Rev. Thomas Contarine, written round about the end of 1753, as follows:—

“ My dear Uncle,—

“ After having spent two winters in Edinburgh, I now prepare to go to France the 10th of next February. I have seen all this country can exhibit in the medical way, and therefore intend to visit Paris, where the great Mr. Farhein, Petit, and Du Hammel de Monceau instruct their pupils in all the branches of medicine. They speak French, and consequently I shall have much the advantage of most of my countrymen, as I am perfectly acquainted with that language, and few who leave Ireland are so. Since I am upon so pleasing a topic as self-applause, give me leave to say that the circle of science which I have run through, before I undertook the study of physic, is not only useful, but absolutely necessary to the making a skilful physician. Such sciences enlarge our understanding, and sharpen our sagacity; and what is a practitioner without both but an empiric, for never yet was a disorder found entirely the same in two patients. A quack, unable to distinguish the particularities in each disease, prescribes at a venture: if he finds such a disorder may be called by the general name of fever, for instance, he has a set of remedies which he applies to cure it, nor does he desist till his medicines are run out, or his patient has lost his life. But the skilful physician distinguishes the symptoms: manures the sterility of nature or prunes her luxuriance: nor does he depend so much on the efficacy of medicines, as on their proper



application. I shall spend this spring and summer in Paris, and the beginning of next winter go to Leyden. The great Albinus is still alive there, and 'twill be proper to go, though only to have it said that we have studied in so famous an university."

Of this letter it may be said that it would be difficult to find in the most thoughtful medical literature of the time so enlightened a plea for rational therapeutics as against the penny-in-the-slot practice of medicine, which was then almost universal: nor so clear an appreciation of the double rôle of medicine, as a science of the sciences on the one hand and as an art on the other. It is the letter of a man whose horizon is broad, and the foundations of whose knowledge have been laid broad and deep, and shows no trace of lack of earnestness in the serious pursuit of his profession. One almost wishes that Percy had interjected fewer emendatory glosses, and sister Hodson too, who throws light on the circumstance of his deliberately courting the increased expenditure of studentship at foreign universities at a time of severe pecuniary straits, when she speaks of his native restlessness and inborn love of travel—a passion that, under favouring conditions, was destined very soon to become the dominant influence.

On leaving Edinburgh, in February 1754, Paris, and not Leyden, was apparently his immediate objective. A letter, written a few weeks later from Leyden, says that he set sail on a ship bound for Bordeaux, but was driven by a storm into Newcastle, where he was arrested, as his ship-mates were found to be Scotchmen who had been enlisting recruits for the French army in Scotland. After a fortnight in prison he was able to disprove his complicity and was set at liberty, but meantime the ship had proceeded on its journey which was doomed to end in a disastrous wreck. In this plight he was constrained to take such passage as offered, which was, as he tells us, in "a ship at that time ready for Holland": so from Newcastle he sailed to Rotterdam, and travelled thence by land to Leyden. In this same letter is found the following injunction to his uncle, resident, be it remembered, in Ireland: "Dear Sir, keep all this a secret, or at least say it was for debt; for if it were once known at the University, I should hardly get a degree." Now had his uncle's tongue wagged ever so loudly, it could hardly have been heard by any university but that of Dublin, and that this University was actually in Goldsmith's mind is confirmed by another passage of the letter, which speaks of his expectation of being back in Kilmore in less than a year—i.e., two and a half years since he had left Ireland, and when he would be qualified both by study and lapse of time to present himself for examination for a medical degree.

At Leyden Goldsmith learnt the salutary lesson that medicine was more effectively taught in Edinburgh. "Physic," he writes, "is by no means taught so well as in Edinburgh; and in all Leyden there are but four British students owing to all necessaries being so extremely dear and the professors so very lazy (the chemical professor excepted), that we don't much care to come hither." Gaubius, we learn from the "Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning" (ch. ix), was the professor of chemistry, and with him Goldsmith was on terms of familiar intercourse. It is strange that beyond a mere mention in the Percy memoranda, he should have nothing to say of the professor of anatomy, the great Albinus, whose anatomical plates were at that time unrivalled, and held their place among the best until comparatively recent times. One of the four British students in Leyden was Goldsmith's fellow-countryman, Dr. Ellis, a qualified medical man prosecuting post-graduate study. From him Percy learnt that Goldsmith was in chronic pecuniary straits, eking out existence by teaching his native language, and now and then resorting to the gaming table in the futile hope of re-establishing financial equilibrium, but there is no mention of any degree conferred on him at Leyden. Indeed, Prior prints in a footnote in his "Life of Goldsmith" (ed. 1837, i, p. 171) a letter of which the following is an excerpt: "Dr. Wenckebach, of Breda, has had the kindness to request of Professor Reinwardt to ascertain from the Album Academicum of the University of Leyden, whether Goldsmith was a student from 1754 to 1756, or whether any degree was conferred on him by that University; and the result of the inquiry is in each case in the negative."

There is no certain evidence of the precise duration of Goldsmith's stay in Leyden. The Percy memoranda fix it at "about a year," which seems to be correct, but in the same sentence "two years and a half" are assigned to his Edinburgh residence, which lasted but sixteen months. Anyone who is fully conversant with the available details of Goldsmith's life cannot fail to discern that it was at Leyden that the desire for travel came to prevail over the desire for medical study. How far this was due to the dullness of the professors, how far to his straitened circumstances, how far to extraneous causes, we have scant means of determining, though there is a very definite indication of what influence it was that directed his footsteps so soon as he had shaken the dust of Leyden off his feet. This was the example of the Danish writer, Baron de Holberg, who was much talked of at the time as a recently deceased celebrity. Writing of him in his "Enquiry



into the Present State of Polite Learning," published in the spring of 1759, Goldsmith says :—

" His ambition was not to be restrained, or his thirst of knowledge satisfied until he had seen the world. Without money, recommendations, or friends, he undertook to set out upon his travels, and to make the tour of Europe on foot. A good voice and a trifling skill in music were the only finances he had to support an undertaking so extensive ; so he travelled by day, and at night sung at the doors of peasants' houses to get himself a lodging. In this manner, while yet very young, Holberg passed through France, Germany, and Holland."

Goldsmith might well have been penning the story of his own travels. Pending the publication of those letters, of the fortunate survival of which Sir Ernest Clarke has apprised us, we are dependent for further details of his travels chiefly upon some articles by his Irish friend, Cooke, published in the *European Magazine* in 1793. These, though of much interest, are of present importance only in so far as they show how impossible must medical study have been under the conditions. Such allusions, too, as can be found in Goldsmith's writings and letters all testify to the fact that his eyes were now set on the horizon of a wider world than the world of medicine ; already his poem " The Traveller " was coming laboriously to birth.

Louvain seems to have been an early halting place. How long he stayed here we know not, though it was long enough for him to become acquainted with its professors and modes of study ; we await evidence of his having even applied himself here to medical study in particular, and yet his first biographer and intimate friend, Glover, wrote in 1774, the year of Goldsmith's death, that he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Physic at Louvain, and no one appears to have questioned it at the time. Long ago Prior ascertained that the records of Louvain for the years 1754-56 had been lost or destroyed in the revolutionary wars, and that no appeal to them was possible, and inquiries instituted at Louvain in 1832 failed to elicit any information of Goldsmith whatever. The tradition of the Louvain degree seems to have passed current among Goldsmith's friends, for Dr. M'Donnell, who, as a lad, aged 18, had been befriended by him in London and acted for a short time in 1772 as his amanuensis, told Prior that such was his own recollection. Both Glover and M'Donnell were Irishmen, Glover indeed had actually studied medicine in Dublin, and each of them must have possessed abundant facilities for ascertaining the truth of Goldsmith having obtained a degree in Dublin. It is at least arguable that the know-

ledge that he had not done so may have engendered or strengthened their belief in the acquisition of a foreign degree. Moreover, the Percy memoranda, dictated by Goldsmith himself, make no mention of a degree acquired at any foreign university, coupled with an explicit assurance that he had taken a medical degree elsewhere. True, it is not explicitly stated that it was obtained at Dublin, but Goldsmith at the age of 20 had had no relations with any other university; moreover, on the occasion of the bestowal of the *ad eundem* M.B. degree by Oxford University, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* of February 18, 1769, describes him as Batchelor of Physic in the University of Dublin. In face of this accumulated evidence the idea of a Louvain degree is quite untenable. The reappearance of the statement in so many of the biographies that appeared shortly after Goldsmith's death has perhaps earned credence for it, but when these are critically examined it is apparent, beyond all question, that the assertion has been derived by most of them from Glover's account, in the absence of any positive knowledge of their own.

Paris seems to have been the next important halting-place. Of medical study in Paris we know that he put in an appearance at the chemical lectures of Rouelle, for in his "Polite Learning" he speaks of the number of ladies in the audience. In various passages in his published works he gives us glimpses of his life in Paris and of the thoughts that were uppermost in his mind, but these were not of matters medical.

After quitting Paris Goldsmith seems to have accelerated his travels, going first to Germany, then to Switzerland, where he visited Geneva, Basle, Berne, and other places. Then he passed into Italy, making his first substantial stay at Padua, from which place he visited Milan, Mantua, Verona and Venice, penetrating as far south as Florence. At Padua the so-called Percy Memoir, attached to the four successive editions of Goldsmith's "Miscellaneous Works," first published in 1801, says that "he staid 6 months, and if ever he took any medical degree it was probably in this ancient school of medicine." Reference, however, to the work "De natione Anglica et Scotæ," published by Jo. Aloys Andrich, at Padua, in 1892, shows that the surmise was wrong. There is good reason to think that the stay was considerably less than six months, and as Goldsmith found time to visit from Padua several of the leading cities of northern Italy on foot, there can have been little opportunity for medical study, and we have, at present, no record that he did apply himself to medicine. But before



finally dismissing the statement of the Percy Memoir, that it was at Padua that Goldsmith took a medical degree, if at all, we must know something of his relation to Percy, and something of the genesis of the Percy Memoir.

Percy, Bishop of Dromore, best known in connexion with his "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," was first introduced to Goldsmith at his lodgings in Green Arbour Court, in March, 1759, and from that time till Goldsmith's death in 1774, cherished an intimate friendship with him. It was to Percy that Goldsmith, on April 28, 1773, dictated the materials for his own biography, which we have called the Percy Memoranda. From this document we have already cited the passage, which can mean nothing, and can have meant nothing to Percy, but that Goldsmith had obtained his original medical degree at Dublin. That Percy received this statement with some reservation is apparent from one of the memoranda recently brought to light by Sir Ernest Clarke, in Percy's own handwriting, in which he says in connexion with the granting of the Oxford *ad eundem* degree in 1769: "N.B.—On this occasion Dr. Goldsmith was admitted *ad eundem gradum*, which he said was M.B." Turning now to the Percy Memoir we read in a footnote: "In February, 1769, Dr. Goldsmith made an excursion to Oxford with Dr. Johnson, and was admitted in that celebrated university *ad eundem gradum*, which he said was that of M.B." Percy was also of the party. Now the almost exact verbal identity of the concluding words of these two passages, and their very suggestive nature, show that each was written either by the same person or from the same notes. Whoever penned this latter passage must then have had before him Goldsmith's own statement, that he had taken his medical degree [at Dublin] at the age of about 20; yet the text to which the footnote is appended suggests that if ever he took a medical degree at all it was at Padua, when he was aged 26.

To identify the author of these passages we must turn for a moment to the composition of the Percy Memoir, as the champions of the Dublin medical degree do not permit it to be called in evidence, on the plea that it is the product of several hands. Samuel Johnson having neglected, as had been arranged, to write the biography of Goldsmith, Percy was constrained himself to undertake the task. Commencing about 1785, he spent several years in collecting materials from Goldsmith's relatives and friends. Among many who supplied him with information to supplement his own memoranda were Goldsmith's sister, Mrs. Hodson, and his sister-in-law, Henry Goldsmith's



widow. So little progress was made that Percy handed his materials to an Irish clergyman, one Dr. Thomas Campbell, who produced an outline memoir by the autumn of 1791. The bishop then made copious marginal notes, and his chaplain, Mr. Boyd, redrafted the whole, incorporating the bishop's notes. Then followed a prolonged wrangle with the booksellers, resulting in the withdrawal of Percy from the post of editor, and the inevitable appointment of another editor, Mr. Rose. The Percy Correspondence does unquestionably suggest that Rose made interpolations into the text, but it also testifies that Percy accepted the memoir as his own work. Percy cannot have believed Goldsmith's statement as to the Dublin medical degree, and if the suggestion of Padua came from him at all, it is probable that, out of loyalty to his dear friend, he did the best to suggest a *provenance* that was not inherently improbable, for there were Irish professors at Padua.

Having written Goldsmith down untruthful, it would seem desirable to state the grounds on which such an allegation is based. There is a remarkable unanimity among Goldsmith's biographers and friends as to the exuberance of statement that derived from his fervid Celtic imagination, and we need cite but a few illustrations out of many. Boswell, who appreciated his genius very ill, but his character very well, says of him: "His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth," and assuredly a medical degree would have given consequence to a struggling practitioner. Boswell cites actual examples of his untruthfulness; and here is other evidence from Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes*: "Who will be my biographer, do you think?" Johnson asked. "Goldsmith, no doubt," cried Mrs. Thrale, "and he will do it the best among us." "The dog would write it best, to be sure," said Johnson, "but his particular malice towards me and general disregard of truth would make the book useless to all and injurious to my character." Percy, too, laughs in the same strain as Boswell, at his claiming relationship to Oliver Cromwell on account of his name, when he well knew it to be derived from his mother's father, Oliver Jones. It can hardly be contended that the assumption of a fictitious medical degree would have been incompatible with his habitual standard of veracity. Imagination sees things as they should be rather than as they are, and we love it none the less because of its peccant idealism. And if Goldsmith did sin, he sinned, at any rate, in a goodly company of spurious graduates, and in a contemporary professional atmosphere very tolerant of such obliquity.



Towards the end of 1755 Goldsmith left Padua and started on his journey home. After an arduous tramp through France on foot, finding lodging at convents, chiefly of the Irish nation, he landed penniless at Dover on February 1, 1756.

From the comfortable seclusion of one's writing table, it is no easy problem to predict the probable workings of a destitute wanderer's mind. Many of us will have landed at Dover empty, few penniless as well. The first impulse would likely be to make for London, working the way by any and every means coming to hand. This is what Goldsmith did, so says an acquaintance, seeking work in an apothecary's shop in one of the towns through which he passed, but in vain, and arriving in London in from ten to fourteen days. Once in London, we may presume that he would seek the most profitable employment open to his attainments and qualifications. Now there is abundant evidence that he first sought employment as an usher, and failing this as "assistant" to various London apothecaries, but their doors were closed to a man who could not establish his identity, let alone his good character. And yet all the while the diploma of his alleged university degree must have been in his pocket! At last he came to temporary anchorage as journeyman to an apothecary, named Jacob, on Fish Street Hill, beside the Monument. The "journeyman" was the porter or man who delivered the medicines and made himself useful in the shop and laboratory; his duties lay with the broom and basket, not with the pestle and mortar, which were wielded by the apothecary and his "assistant." So far, then, there is no evidence that Goldsmith aspired to practise medicine.

While thus employed, his old Edinburgh friend, now Dr. Sleigh, found him, and from this meeting Goldsmith emerges, by the joint efforts of Jacob and Sleigh, as "physician in a humble way" in Bankside, Southwark. This is positively the first appearance of Goldsmith in the rôle of physician. One itches to know what passed at this meeting with Sleigh. Did his "desire of imaginary consequence" in the eyes of his successful fellow-student induce him to assume a fictitious degree? Did he produce his diploma and satisfy his friends of his claim? Did he adopt their advice to do what hundreds of others were doing in London, unlicensed medical practice?—and not a few of them under the shelter of a forged diploma of foreign graduation. We incline to the first of these alternatives as most in harmony with subsequent events. There is also a valuable piece of side evidence to be found in the biography attached to "The Poetical Works of Oliver



Goldsmith. With a sketch of the Author's Life: Including Original Anecdotes Communicated by the Rev. John Evans, A.M., 1804." Evans says that his information was derived from one of the daughters of Dr. Milner, of Peckham, whose roof, a few months later, afforded constant shelter to Goldsmith on terms of intimate friendship. This memoir states that Goldsmith obtained a degree in medicine at Louvain, and also that he was an M.B. when he returned to London in 1756. We may take it, then, that these traditions were current in the Milner family; and from whom can they have obtained them but from Goldsmith himself, who will have spoken under the chastening influence of the presence of young Milner, a doctor and former fellow-student of Goldsmith in Edinburgh?

His old Irish acquaintance and school-fellow, Beatty, has left it on record how Goldsmith bore himself in his practice:—

"He was in a suit of green and gold, miserably old and tarnished: his shirt and neck-cloth appeared to have been worn at least a fortnight; but he said he was practising physic, and doing very well."

Again "the desire of imaginary consequence" in face of poverty and want.

Prior gives another illustration, derived from Reynolds, of Goldsmith's desire at this juncture, at any rate, to *appear* a physician:—"

"In conformity to the prevailing garb of the day for physicians, Goldsmith, unable to obtain a new, had procured a second-hand velvet coat; but either from being deceived in the bargain or by subsequent accident, a considerable breach in the left breast was obliged to be repaired by the introduction of a new piece. This had not been so neatly done as not to be apparent to the close observation of his acquaintance and such persons as he visited in the capacity of medical attendant; willing, therefore, to conceal what is considered too obvious a symptom of poverty, he was accustomed to place his hat over the patch, and retain it there carefully during the visit; but this constant position becoming noticed, and the cause being soon known, occasioned no little merriment at his expense."

But, in spite of Goldsmith's brave words to Beatty, the truth was that as a physician he had not caught on, and was glad to find emancipation from an unprofitable slavery in an introduction by a printer's workman, one of his patients, to the printer Samuel Richardson, author of "*Clarissa*," from whom he now accepted a post of reader and corrector to the press. Here Dr. Farr, another Edinburgh fellow-student now in London, found him at work in his spare hours on a tragedy, about which he invited his opinion; but we soon find him installed as an



usher in the school of Dr. Milner, at Peckham. Three months of this employment, hateful to Goldsmith in spite of the kindness of the Milners, drove him back to the precarious livelihood of a literary hack. A letter of December 27, 1757, to his brother-in-law, Hodson, in Ireland, defines his recent attempts to earn a livelihood. "By a very little practice as a physician, and a very little reputation as a poet, I make shift to live." This is important only in so far as it introduces Goldsmith to his own family in the character of physician.

Next year (1758) Goldsmith is back again as usher with Dr. Milner, who has promised to obtain a medical appointment in India for him. Three months later the appointment of physician and surgeon to one of the factories on the coast of Coromandel is at his acceptance. He tells his brother-in-law that the East India Company have signed his warrant, and that he has paid £10 for it, while the expense of outfit, passage, and stores, will come to some £120 or £130 more. The salary, it is true, is only £100 a year; but the exclusive privilege of additional private practice is likely to bring in £1,000 a year besides. This Goldsmith holds out to his brother-in-law as his real inducement "to leave a place where I am every day gaining friends and esteem, and where I might enjoy all the conveniences of life"; and this at a time when he was quite unknown and face to face with starvation, with no friends but the small publishers who gave him casual employment as a literary drudge. The prospective expenses of the appointment were far more than Goldsmith could hope to earn by literature, and it is not difficult to detect the inwardness of his letter to his well-to-do, but prudent, brother-in-law. The books of the East India Company are silent on the subject of this appointment, but by November, 1758, it was cancelled. Goldsmith himself says that he was seduced by the assurance of literary occupation with Griffiths, the bookseller; but, even so, lack of funds may have been a contributory factor. Maybe Goldsmith was unable to produce evidence of qualification or professional competence.

Sir Ernest Clarke suggests that, in view of the proffered Coromandel appointment, Goldsmith applied to Dublin for the degree of M.B., and received it *in absentia*. Such an occurrence must have been known in the Milner family, by whom the appointment was secured, and yet their family tradition favoured the Louvain degree. His medical biographer, Sir James Prior, whose opinion justly carries great weight, thinks that Goldsmith was unwilling to cut himself adrift for so long, perhaps for life, from a literary career. Be that as it may, we find him



on December 21, 1758, clad in a new suit, for which the bookseller Griffiths had advanced the money, presenting himself for examination at the Surgeons' Hall, erected six years previously in the Old Bailey. The result may still be seen in the register of the Royal College of Surgeons, from which the following extract is derived: "At a Court of Examiners held at the Theatre, 21st December, 1758. Present." Here the names of the examiners are omitted, but they were probably Messrs. Mark Hawkins, Fullagar, Nourse, Girle, Singleton, and Roul. A list of candidates follows, among whom we read: "James Bernard, mate to an hospital. Oliver Goldsmith, found not qualified for ditto." Prior thinks that Goldsmith had determined to endure the briefer exile of an appointment to the naval or medical service, in lieu of the Indian appointment, but he does not tell us why a university graduate should be suing for the humble post of hospital mate, to enable him to undertake work for which such a medical degree would have already qualified him. We shall not be surprised to find that no mention of this examination is made in the statement dictated by Goldsmith to Percy, if, as we believe, he had adopted a fictitious degree, for such mention must needs have exposed the fiction.

From December 21, 1758, to March 31, 1763, the record of published literary work is so continuous as to put out of court the possibility of Goldsmith having devoted himself to studying for a medical degree, or indeed to medical practice except in vicarious fashion. The latter date brings us to the much quoted formal agreement, now in the British Museum, between James Dodsley and Oliver Goldsmith, signed by both of them, for the publication of a "Chronological History of the Lives of Eminent Persons of Great Britain and Ireland." In the body of this agreement, which presumably would have been drawn up by or for Dodsley, Goldsmith is alluded to as "Oliver Goldsmith, M.B.," but it is signed simply "Oliver Goldsmith." The signature is evidence that Goldsmith did not repudiate the medical degree assigned to him by Dodsley, but is not evidence that he then actually possessed the degree. Goldsmith had certainly enjoyed the titular prefix "Dr." before the date of this agreement, for example, in some of the advertisements of *The Citizen of the World*. The laity have always been lavish of the title on the flimsiest of pretexts: in the writer's native village the doctor's coachman was always known on the cricket field as "Dr." Its bestowal on Goldsmith, who had studied and even practised medicine, was inevitable, and is no guarantee of a medical diploma, still less of a medical degree.



On December 19, 1764, *The Traveller* was published bearing the name of "Oliver Goldsmith, M.B." From this time onward his name is seldom mentioned without the prefix "Dr."

In June, 1765, at the suggestion of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Goldsmith again and for the last time essayed the practice of medicine. Reynolds urged on him that a regular calling gave a man a social status. Garth, Cowley, Akenside, Smollett, and others had successfully combined literature and medicine. Prior, by the light of tailor Filby's ledger, displays Goldsmith in purple silk small-clothes, a handsome scarlet roquelaure buttoned close under the chin, a full professional wig, a sword, and a gold-headed cane. In the ensuing six months Filby was requisitioned for no fewer than three similar suits; the right effect was to be produced at any cost. Next came a manservant, but still no practice; clearly Goldsmith's was a hopeless case. The only record of this new venture in practice that survives relates to his acquaintance, Mrs. Sidebotham. Her waiting-woman used to relate how he strutted into the sick-room of her mistress with his queer little figure stuck through with his sword, like a huge pin. One day a dispute arising between the apothecary and Goldsmith, the physician, on a matter of a dose, the lady wisely decided to follow the apothecary's advice, and Goldsmith left the house indignantly. "He would leave off prescribing for his friends," he said. "Do so, my dear Doctor," observed Beauclerc, the cultivated roué, "Whenever you undertake to kill let it be only your enemies." So ended this brief untimely venture in the rôle of physician, and four years of strenuous literary labour pass before we arrive at the next landmark of our investigation.

On February 14, 1769, Percy, Johnson, and Goldsmith went down together to Oxford, and there were guests of Chambers, then Vinerian Professor of Law, and five years later a judge in India. We have already cited the terms of the Percy memoir on this subject: "In February, 1769, Dr. Goldsmith made an excursion to Oxford with Dr. Johnson, and was admitted in that celebrated University *ad eundem gradum*, which he said was that of M.B." Turning to the Percy memoranda, we find the source from which the Percy memoir derived its statement:—

"Tuesday, 14 Feby. I went with Mr. Johnson and Dr. Goldsmith to Oxford."

"W. 15. We all dined in University College."

"Th. 16. We dined with Mr. Morthwaite at Queen's College,"

" Fri. 17. We dined with Tom Warton in Trin. Col."

" Sat. 18. We all returned to Town."

" N.B.—On this occasion Dr. Goldsmith was admitted *ad eundem gradum*, wch he said was M.B."<sup>1</sup>

In each record we find the suggestive words "which he said," whereas the admission to the degree is stated as an accomplished fact. Unfortunately there is a gap in the Register of Degrees conferred in Convocation just at this period, as indicated in the following letter of Dr. Bliss, quondam Registrar of Oxford University, to Sir James Prior:—

" Oxford, Feb. 24, 1834.

" Dear Sir,—I have now fully ascertained that no record of Goldsmith's admission *ad eundem* exists upon the registers of the university: but I have by no means ascertained that the Poet was not so admitted. On the contrary, I incline to believe that the Bishop of Dromore's impression was correct. It is a singular fact that there is a chasm in the Register of Convocation for 1769 from March 14 to March 18, which was the last day of Lent Term, and it is possible certainly that the admission of Goldsmith might have taken place in that interval. I told you I would mention the subject to the venerable President of Magdalen. I have done so, and he does not remember to have heard anything relative to Goldsmith's visit to Oxford."

That Goldsmith was actually admitted to this *ad eundem* degree seems to be placed beyond reasonable doubt by a recent find of the present Regius Professor of Medicine of Oxford in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, for Saturday, February 18, 1769:—

" Yesterday Oliver Goldsmith, Esq., Batchelor of Physick in the University of Dublin, author of 'The Traveller, a Poem,' of the 'Present State of Polite Learning in Europe,' and of several other learned and ingenious Performances, was admitted in Congregation to the same Degree in this University."

Now it is pretty clear that Goldsmith can have produced no diploma of this degree, for the records of Dublin University are extant, and if ever recorded there, it would still be on record, which is not the case. Oxford University Congregation, therefore, must have acted on the

<sup>1</sup> Even this Oxford degree, though its genuineness appears to be proven, is not entirely above suspicion. It is not entered in Percy's daily records under the appropriate day, and the event would seem to be at least as important as a dinner with Tom Warton; indeed, Percy considers it of such importance as to demand the prefix "N.B." Did Goldsmith's buffoonery prompt him to use *Jackson's Oxford Journal* as the medium of an elaborate hoax? There are other instances of jesting communications to the Press from his pen. We should understand then why the event is chronicled in Percy's daily record not on the day of its occurrence, but on the day of its appearance in the *Oxford Journal*.



strength of Goldsmith's statement. For the first and only time in his life Goldsmith is called upon to name the precise *provenance* of the supposed original degree, and he ties himself down to Dublin. On no other recorded occasion, when claiming the degree, as he did in his statement to Percy, does he give to it a local habitation and a name. So, by no other criterion than Goldsmith's own statements, we are asked to believe that Dublin conferred an M.B. degree on Goldsmith before he had commenced the study of medicine, after an unsatisfactory period of residence for his degree in Arts, and without making any record of the circumstance. And though numbers of his friends in London came from Dublin, and some had actually been his fellow-students in that University, there was not one who, at his death, could assign his degree to its appropriate university, their general impression being that it had been gained at Louvain.

Goldsmith lived long enough to learn that a man's degrees are not the true measure of his greatness, and from assuming degrees that he had not we find him transfigured into flouting those that he had. Cooke, Evans, and other biographers say that towards the end of his life, and about the time of the successful production of "She Stoops to Conquer," he deliberately rejected the prefix "Dr." In the Prologue, written by Garrick, to this play, there are some very suggestive lines: no one who reads it can fail to see that Garrick is amusing himself, and prospectively his audience, by pulling Goldsmith's leg. The whole prologue should be read, and the following lines specially noted:—

No *poisonous drugs* are mixed in what he gives ;  
Should he succeed, you'll give him his degree ;  
If not, within he will receive no fee !  
The college. You must his pretensions back,  
Pronounce him *regular*, or dub him quack.

In themselves these lines may be variously interpreted, but when all the evidence points in the direction of one interpretation, they must be allowed a cumulative effect.

In less than a year's time from this Goldsmith was destined to make his last reckoning with the medical science that he had successively courted and spurned. In March, 1774, he was hard at work on his poem "Retaliation," as well as on several other literary undertakings, that promised some measure of relief to his pecuniary embarrassments, when an old enemy assailed him. For some years, says Glover, he had suffered from an ailment, of which the leading symptom was strangury. The first unquestionable evidence we have of this particular disorder is

in 1772, when he was attended by the famous Dr. James and obtained relief, seemingly, from the administration of his antimonial powder. There is little doubt, however, that the trouble was of longer duration than this, and Prior indicates that Goldsmith had permanently damaged his health by his dissipated life when a student at Edinburgh. Scattered allusions by Cradock and others show that, in the earlier attack of 1772, he obtained relief of the local symptom, but his general health remained affected, causing great depression of spirits as well as some irritability of temper : even when in company he was constrained to restrict his evening meal to boiled milk.

It is pretty evident that Goldsmith suffered from recurrent attacks of cystitis, which, though temporarily relieved, were never completely cured, while by the backward invasion of his urinary tract his whole system suffered from chronic septic absorption. Of the special bacterial origin of this cystitis there is a good deal of suggestive evidence, as medical readers will readily anticipate.

Such, then, was Goldsmith's condition, when he returned from his Edgware lodging to London, in the middle of March, 1774, for the sake of more efficient treatment. There he saw a doctor and obtained relief from his strangury, but the symptoms of septic absorption became more intense, and he died with unmistakable evidence of profound affection of his kidneys.

On Friday, March 25, a low fever having supervened, Goldsmith took to his bed in his chambers in the Temple, and sent for the apothecary William Hawes at 11 o'clock at night. He complained of a violent pain extending all over the fore-part of his head ; his tongue was moist ; he had no cold shiverings nor pain in any other part, and the pulse-rate was about 90 per minute. He had already taken 2 oz. of ipecacuanha wine as an emetic, but was bent on taking James's powder as well, which he asked Hawes to send him. Hawes pleaded that his condition was more nervous than febrile, and that an opiate was the appropriate treatment to soothe his stomach after the emetic, while at the same time inducing sleep and relieving his headache. But Goldsmith was obdurate. In vain Hawes pleaded that the powder was likely to encourage instead of allaying his vomiting, and to produce diarrhoea with dangerous exhaustion. Hawes claims to have said, "Please, sir, to observe that, if you do take the fever powder, it is entirely without my approbation." But, in spite of this, he did actually send a supply of James's powders from his own apothecary's shop. He had, however, induced Goldsmith to call in Dr. Fordyce in his stead,



and this physician repeated the advice that Hawes had already given. Nevertheless the patient administered to himself, with the assistance of his attendants, two or three powders, with the immediate consequences that Hawes had predicted. When Goldsmith found that the powders had not the desired effect, he exclaimed, "Damn that Hawes! I ordered him to send me James's powder, and he has sent me some other." A messenger was sent forthwith to the shop of the proprietor Newbery for the genuine powders, and these were administered by Goldsmith's servants. So strong was Goldsmith's impression that Hawes had sent a counterfeit powder, in spite of the fact that those procured from Newbery produced identical effects, that he took a dislike to him, and told his servants to pay him his account and discharge him. A neighbouring apothecary, Maxwell, was actually called in, in his stead, but he seems to have declined attendance, as Goldsmith was already in good hands.

On the morning of Saturday, March 26, Hawes called, but, as Goldsmith's servant Eyles said that his master was dozing, he went away and returned in the evening. The servant then informed him that Goldsmith had vomited all day, and that profuse diarrhoea had persisted for eighteen hours, yet still his master had insisted on taking more powders. Hawes found him in a condition of profound exhaustion, with quick, thready pulse, and only able to say in a low voice that he wished he had followed his advice. The same Saturday evening Fordyce called on Hawes, and asked him to call in another physician, as Goldsmith rejected his advice. Accordingly on Sunday morning at 8 a.m., vomiting and diarrhoea having continued throughout the night, Dr. Turton associated himself with Fordyce in the care of the patient. These two visited him twice daily till his death.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the ensuing week sleep deserted Goldsmith, and his growing weakness gave rise to grave anxiety: still he was conscious, and spasmodic efforts at cheerfulness seemed to encourage hope. Turton, noticing the state of his pulse, said to him, "Your pulse is in greater disorder than it should be from the degree of fever which you have. Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not" were the last words to pass his lips. On Sunday night he fell asleep, but at 4 o'clock on Monday morning the apothecary, Maxwell, was summoned in great haste, and on his arrival found him in strong convulsions, which continued without intermission until his death at 4.45 a.m.

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to piece together an unimpeachable description of Goldsmith's last illness in detail. Hawes's account is very full of detail, but must be accepted with considerable caution. The affidavits appended to it read like fair specimens of hard lying.

Three days after his death Horace Walpole wrote to Mason that he had died of a purple fever. While accepting with caution lay evidence at secondhand, it may be said that a purpuric eruption would be quite compatible with the other features of the illness.

The news of Goldsmith's death came as a profound shock to his friends: Johnson, Burke, Reynolds and the rest bowed their heads in sorrow. But most moving tribute of all, a company of poor women, the flotsam and jetsam of this great soulless city, gathered before the death-chamber door to shed a parting tear for their dead friend. "Let not his frailties be remembered, he was a great man." That was Johnson's requiem, and let that be ours.